The Haridasas of Karnataka



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PREFACE

The Haridasas were the Vaishnava saints of Karnatak who preached the cult of Vishnu-bhakti from the 15th to the end of the 19th Century. They stressed the need for moral life and cultivation of devotion to God. They were called the 'servants of God' in recognition of the saintly Life they lived and their whole-hearted commitment to God. They were not 'sectarians' in any narrow or derogatory sense of the term since they emphasised the oneness of God and man's moral purity as the precondition for the cultivtion of devotion to Him; they addressed their teaching to any one who would take life seriously without being lost in its trivialities and try to give it an ethical and spiritual orientation.

The Haridasas presented the quintessence of Hindu Philosophy in their teaching, and the truths of the Vedanta philosophy – which were till their time found mostly in the Sanskrit texts alone – came to be expressed by them in the idiom of colloquial Kannada; moreover, they chose to express the philosophical truths through the medium of simple poems or songs and the use of this aesthetic medium added an additional charm to their teaching. The songs of the Haridasas were both musical and philosophical, and could serve as an effective medium for the transmission of philosophical truths, inasmuch as they could be easily sung and remembered; they had a direct appeal to the mind of the common man and thus accounted for their immense popularity and lasting influence over the minds of the common people in Karnatak.

There have been some good books on the Haridasas in recent years in Kannada, but books in English are rare. The purpose of this small book is to give a brief exposition of the teaching of the Haridasas and it is mainly intended for those who cannot have a direct access to the Haridasa literature in Kannada, but who would nevertheless like to know about its philosophical content. With this purpose in view, long quotations in Kannada are avoided and only their summaries in English are given. It is hoped that this small book will be of some interest to all the religious and philosophical minded people who would like to acquaint themselves with the main features of teaching of the Haridasas.

I am indebted to my esteemed teacher Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Mysore, for the clarification he gave me on some of the points in this book. I am obliged to my friend Dr. A. V. Venkata Ratnam of the Department of History, for some of his valuable suggestions. I am also thankful to the editors and authors of the several books to which I have made references in this short treatise.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to me that the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum, is publishing this small book. My thanks are due to its Board of Trustees and the Editorial Committee for accepting to publish this work.

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G. Srinivasan.

CHAPTER I

The Origin of Vishnu-Bhakti.

The concept of Bhakti (Devotion) is as old as the Vedas in India. Accordingly, we find in them several prayers being addressed to gods. Vishnu is one of the many gods recognised in the Vedas, but he is given an important place. In the Rgveda Vishnu is said to measure the whole cosmos by his three feet; he is said to be great (*paramah*)[1] and is described as the seed of the cosmic order (*Rtasya-garbham*); he is also said to be the helper of gods against demons in the battlefield. The Satapatha Brahmana, the Taittareya Aranyaka and the Panchavimsa Brahmana speak of the valour of Vishnu and of his becoming the Sun. The antiquity of the Bhakti cult cannot thus be doubted since the excavations at Mohen-jodaro and Harappa have disclosed that temples for worship were built in India in very ancient times.

Maxmuller and some other western scholars believe

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1. Iyettareya Brahmana I. 1.

that originally there was polytheism (belief in many gods of equal status) in the Vedas, and sometime later Henotheism (belief in one god being supreme at a time), which, in its turn, led to Monotheism (belief in only one Supreme God for all times). But many Indian scholars do not believe that there was such historical development in the Hindu philosophical conception of the Ultimate Reality; they maintain that Hindu philosophy was monotheistic from the beginning and that all the Vedas and the Upanishads had the same goal in view, namely, Brahman. This point has received special emphasis in the hands of Sri Madhvacharya of the 13th Century A. D.

It is however believed by some scholars[2] that the Bhagavata cult was originally distinct from the Vedic cult which preached the performance of rituals and sacrifices. The Bhagavata cult was also called Satvata Dharma or Ekantika Dharma. The founder of this cult was said to be the kshatriya Krishna, the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. He taught monotheism and devotion as the only means of God-realization. He designated his God as 'Bhagavat' and his followers as Bhagavatas. But in course of time, the founder of the cult was himself deified and came to be worshipped as the Supreme God. The Chapter on 'Narayana' in the Santiparva of the Mahabharata is said to contain the basic material of Bhagavata Dharma.

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2. Please see : George. A. Grierson's article, "Bhakti Marga", in **Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II**) pp. 540–542.

However, probably during the 4th Century B. C. the Vedic cult which preached the performance of sacrifices was integrated with the Bhagavata cult which preached pure devotion, in order to meet the challenge of Buddhism. As a result of this integration, Krishna came to be regarded as an *avatar* (incarnation) of the Supreme God or Vishnu who would take different forms in order to uplift Dharma whenever it declined. Thereafter, Bhagavata Dharma came to be known as Vaishnava Dharma. The signs of this integration, it is believed, can be seen in the Bhagavadgita, the Narayaniya of Santiparva in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Puranas.

But this view seems to regard the epics as at least partly post-Buddhistic and hence many scholars do not agree with it; they believe that the epics are pre-Buddhistic and that the Bhagavata cult was of Vedic origin, and from times immemorial Krishna was being worshipped as the avatar of Vishnu in this country. The earliest evidence of this we have in the Chandogya Upanishad.[3] Panini who seems to have lived probably in the 5th Century B. C. refers to the fact of Krishna being already worshipped as the avatar of Vishnu in his time. Patanjali of about the 4th Century B. C. refers to the fact of Krishna being known as Vasudeva in his Mahabhashya on Panini.

However, without going too much into the chronological

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3. **Chandogya Upanishad, III, 17.**

details, it can be admitted that during the period of the great epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata (whatever be their dates of composition) Vishnu was recognised as the Supreme God, and Rama and Krishna as His *avatars* (incarnations). The cult of Vishnu-bhakti accordingly is based on these ancient epics as much as on the more ancient scriptures.

The antiquity of Vishnu-bhakti can also be proved with reference to the available inscriptions:[4] the lithic record of Hathibada of about the 3rd or 2nd Century B. C. states that a garden called Narayana-Vatika was donated in honour of the Supreme Gods, Vasudeva and Sankarshana; a Besnagar pillar of the same age refers to the erection of a Garuda pillar in front of the temple of Vasudeva described as the God of Gods; a Mora inscription of about the 1st Century B. C. refers to the images of the five great heroes in association with that of Bnagavan Vishnu or Krishna. The fact that the Bhagavata Dharma had entered Karnatak even before the beginning of the Christian era is disclosed by the Nanghat inscription.[5] The Halmidi inscription which is said to be the most ancient one in Karnatak begins with a prayer to Vishnu.[6]

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4. R. S. Panchamukhi, **Karnatakada Haridasa Sahitya** (in Kannada), 1952. P. VII.
5. Dr. M. Chidanandamurthy, **Kannada Shasanagala Samskritika Adhyayana,** 1966. P. 164.
6. Annual Report of the Mysore Archaelogical Department, 1936, No. 16.

The tradition of Vishnu-bhakti suffered for a while under the influence of Buddhism especially during the rule of Ashoka, but was revived under the rule of the Sungas who were the successors of the Mauryas. However, it once again suffered under the rule of the Kushans who succeeded the Sungas and popularised Buddhism; but it came to be revived for the second time by the Guptas who succeeded the Kushans and remained popular during the rule of the Guptas and even after their fall in the 6th Century A. D. By that time, however, Jainism had spread to Karnatak under Chandragupta and Bhadrabahu and was very popular in Karnatak during the 4th and 5th Centuries A. D.; the Kadambas who were originally Saivites were greatly responsible for spreading and popularising Jainism. But the Chalukyas of Badami were Vaishnavites and under their rule the influence of Jainism was lessened due to the joint efforts of the Saivite and Vaishnavite scholars. It can be said that Vaishnavism was most popular in Karnatak from the 6th Century to the 8th Century A. D.

But the Rashtrakutas who were the successors of the Chalukyas of Badami could not resist the influence of the Pallavas of Kanchi who were staunch Saivites; consequently, during their reign both Saivism and Vaishnavism were popularised and it was probably about this time (i.e., 8th Century A. D.) that Sri Sankaracharya established his Advaitic Mutt at Sringeri. Besides Vaishnavism and Saivism, Jainism however still continued to be influential on the minds of the people and thus it can be said that these three faiths were together popular in Karnatak from the 8th

Century to the 10th Century A. D. This was mainly due to the matrimonial alliances which the Rashtrakutas contrived with the Pallavas of Kanchi (Saivites) and the Gangas of Talkad (Jains). During the rule of the Rashtrakutas, many Jaina poets like Pampa, Ponna and Ranna lived and each wrote two works - - one on Jainism and the other based on some episode in the Ramayana or the Mahabharata of the Vaishnava cult.

But with the fall of the Rashtrakutas in the 10th Century A. D. and with the rise of the Chalukyas of Kalyani in the same period, Jainism lost its royal support and slowly receded to the western coastal parts of the country. The Chalukyas of Kalyani were Vaishnavites in the beginning, but became Saivites due to the influence of the Cholas who had succeeded the saiva Pallavas of Kanchi. During their rule Saivism was highly popularised and in the 12th Century A. D. Sri Basavesvara founded his cult of Virasaivism in Karnatak. In the end of the 12th Century A. D. the Chalukyan territory came to be occupied by the Yadavas in the North, the Hoysalas in the South and the Kakatiyas of Warrangal in the East. During their rule, Vaishnavism came to be further clouded due to the strong Saivite influence of the Cholas. The Hoysalas of Mysore were however Vaishnavites and patronised Sri Ramanujacharya, the Srivaishnava philosopher who was persecuted by the Cholas of Tanjore and came over to the Hoysala territory in the 12th Century A. D.

The above historical analysis of conflict between

Vaishnavism and Saivism is given, not in order to stress the distinction of Siva and Vishnu which, in fact, is purely a sectarian distinction and is of little philosophical significance. Neither Sri Ramanuja nor Sri Madhva were sectarians in this sense but only tried to stress the conception of Brahman as the Supreme Personality as against the impersonal conception of Brahman. In fact, Brahman, the Supreme Personality is known as 'Isvara' (the Lord) in their Vedantic systems, even though, strangely enough, the term 'Isvara' has come to be associated exclusively with Siva in common parlance. The above analysis, however, is intended to sketch briefly the development of the Bhakti-cult prior to the days of Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva.



CHAPTER II

The Vedantic Basis of The Teaching of The Haridasas.

Sri Ramanuja preached the conception of Brahman as the Absolute Personality and was greatly responsible for the spread of Vishnu- bhakti in Mysore State and North Karnatak in the 12th Century A. D. Some time later Vaishnavism as a distinct branch of theistic philosophy with some of its differences from Sri. Ramanuja's Srivaishnavism came to be developed by Sri Madhva, the son of Madhyageha Bhatta of Pajaka kshetra near Udupi in Karnatak in the 13th Century A. D. This however does not mean that the worship of Vishnu was not in practice before the days of Sri Madhva; for, as shown in the previous chapter, the cult of Vishnu-bhakti was in vogue since the Vedic times. Nor does this mean that the Acharyas prior to Sri Madhva were averse to the worship of Vishnu; for, Sri Sankara the founder of the Advaitic system of philosophy had emphasised in the 8th Century A. D. the worship of Govinda or Vishnu in his *Bhajagovindam* and *Vishnusahasranama*, and Sri Ramanuja the founder of the Visistadvaitic system of philosophy had emphasised the personal attributes of

Brahman and the need for devotion (*bhakti*), self-surrender (*prapatti*) and service (*kainkarya*) to Him about a hundred years prior to Sri Madhva. But the system of Vaishnavism as developed by Sri Madhva had a uniqueness about it. While he agreed with Sri Sankara that Brahman alone was the supreme metaphysical ground of the Universe and that Brahman could be known only through the scriptures, he differed from Sri Sankara regarding the nature of Brahman and the philosophical status of the religious worship; while Sri Sankara sought to maintain that Brahman in its ultimate status would be indeterminate (*nirguna*) and that the dualistic form of religious worship had to be transcended in the realization of the non-difference from Brahman, Sri Madhva sought to establish the nature of Brahman as ultimately personal and tried to show that the question of transcending the proximate relation of thorough dependence on Him would not arise. Sri Madhva's view had, no doubt, greater likeness to Sri Ramanuja's view than to Sri Sankara's, since both Sri Madhva and Sri Ramanuja maintained the ultimate personal status of Brahman. But Sri Madhva could not agree with Sri Ramanuja's Visistadvaita Vedanta on certain fundamental points. While Sri Ramanuja pointed out that the changing world of souls and objects constitutes the 'body' of Brahman, Sri Madhva thought that this would be contradictory to the scriptural statements which preached the 'changelessness' and the internal non-difference of Brahman, and maintained that Brahman is in no sense the upadana karana (material cause) of the Universe but only the nimitta karana (efficient cause). While Sri Ramanuja maintained the equality of the

liberated individual soul with Brahman in knowledge and bliss, Sri Madhva maintained their difference. While Sri Ramanuja could accept the ultimate numerical plurality of souls without qualitative distinctions, Sri Madhva thought that bare numerical plurality without qualitative distinctions of worth would be inconceivable.[1] These are some of the basic differences between the Visistadvaita Vedanta of Sri Ramanuja and the Dvaita Vedanta of Sri Madhva; there are however some other differences which we need not consider here.

A brief statement of the Dvaita system of philosophy propounded by Sri Madhva would be quite relevant at this place, since that happens to be the Vedantic basis of the teachings of the subsequent Vaishnava saints.

Sri Madhva believes that all the scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and the Puranas) have the same goal, namely that of revealing the 'true' nature of Brahman; accordingly, all scriptures are equally important and Sri Madhva bases his philosophy on their integral unity (*samanvaya*); he accepts as authority not only the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and the Brahmasutras, but also the Pancharatragama, the Epics and the Puranas. He does not accept the division of the Upanishadic statements into the 'more important' and the 'less important'

1. Madhva, **Bhashya on Brahma Sutras**, translation: S. Subba Rao, 1904 1. 111. 33.

as Sri Sankara does; nor does he accept the division of the scriptures into Jnanakanda and Karmakanda which is a distinction which Sri Ramanuja has accepted. According to him, all the scriptural passages ultimately refer to the same Reality or Brahman, and hence any division among them would be unnecessary. Accordingly, we find the subsequent Haridasas drawing their material and inspiration from all scriptures and texts which contain in them definite Vaishnavite import.

The first principle in Sri Madhva's philosophy is Brahman. Brahman is the Pre-eminent or Ultimate Reality. He is the Supreme Personality. He possesses all the auspicious personal attributes in infinite abundance. Brahman is one, pure and perfect. He is without internal distinctions and is free from error, evil and change. He is independent or unconditioned while the whole universe is dependent on Him. Since He alone is independent, there is no one equal to Him. He is in this sense the Pre-eminent Reality and anything else can be real only because of Him.

Chetana (sentient souls) and achetana (insentient objects of the world) are both real, but dependent on Brahman for their reality. They depend on Brahman as the consequent on the ground and hence the relation between Brahman and the world is described as *Karana-Karya Sambandha* or *Bimba-Pratibimba Sambandha.* Achetana exists for the sake of chetana and results from the out-flow of Brahman's bliss. Since Brahman is the perfect

Being, He has no other purpose in creation except to enable the souls to have bhoga (worldly experience) and mukti [liberation] according to the yogyata of each.

Difference (*Bheda*) is the key-word in the philosophy of Sri Madhva and any entity which is real exists and is intelligible only in terms of its difference from the other rea entities. Difference as applying to the various categories of reality is said to be five-fo'd in Sri Madhva's philosophy which may be stated as follows:

1. Difference between Brahman and Chetana.
2. Difference between Brahman and Achetana.
3. Difference between Chetana and Achetana.
4. Difference between one individual soul and another.
5. Difference between one material object and another.

Sri Madhva denies both the identity and the equality of the individual soul with Brahman and maintains similarity between them. The Individual soul is limited in its existence, knowledge and bliss while Brahman is unlimited in all these. This similarity implies not their identity but difference, and this difference is not one of mere degree since they differ 'categorically' and belong to different orders of reality. Brahman alone is independent (*svatantra*) while the individual soul is dependent (*paratantra*) on Him for its existence, knowledge and bliss. Brahman maintains the individual soul in existence by His own 'functional' presence in it, and the soul continues to exist as a distinct 'real' as long as the Divine is functionally present in

it. As the indweller [*antaryami*] in each individual soul, Brahman partakes all the joyful experiences of that individual soul, but excludes evil or suffering by virtue of His own supremacy and infinitude.[2]

Sri Madhva recognises three grades of individual souls – Tamoyogyas, Nityasamsarins and Muktiyogyas. This classification is made on the basis of the predominant 'guna' in each one of the grades of souls. Tamas is dominant in the Tamoyogyas, Rajas in the Nityasamsarins, and Sattva in the Muktiyogyas. It is further stated that only the Muktiyogyas (as the name itself indicates) would be eligible for final liberation while others would be in eternal bondage. This is said obviously with the intention of emphasising the need for cultivating the sattvika guna among people.

Sri Madhva maintains that bondage is neither illusory nor alien to the nature of the individual soul. Bondage is real and belongs to the soul as much as liberation. There is in the soul an inherent element of fitness (*yogyata*) which qualifies it both for its worldly experience and liberation. Brahman is in a sense responsible for both the bondage and the liberation of souls; while He binds the souls to Prakrti in accordance with the Karma of each soul, He liberates them through His grace in accordance with their fitness for the same.

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2. **Ibid.**, 1. 11. 8.

Dvaita Vedanta makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge and using the Advaitic terminology, it can be described as the distinction between svarupajnana and vrittijnana. Svarupajnana is the knowledge of the nature of the soul and it arises due to the operation of Sakshi, an infallible organ of knowledge which belongs to the soul inherently and permanently unlike the mind and the other sense organs which belong to it due to its conjunction with the body. Vrittijnana is the knowledge of the external objects gained through the operation of Sakshi along with the mind and the other sense organs. Vrittijnana is not, however, necessarily mithyajnana since it is knowledge of real objects. But error is possible in Vrittijnana while it is not possible in svarupajnana which arises due to the operation of Sakshi only. What Sakshi reveals in svarupajnana is not, however universal consciousness, but the individual soul or the 'I'. Sakshi, the infallible witness which is the seventh organ of the soul pertains to its very nature and the soul can never be without it.

Sri Madhva emphasises the study of the scriptures (sravana), their understanding (manana) and contemplation (nidhidhyasana) as essential for liberation. Man's life should be oriented towards Brahman, and the whole-hearted commitment to God with perfect devotion is sure to win him the Divine grace. There can be no liberation of the individual soul without the Divine grace (prasada). But this does not mean that the Divine grace might not descend on the deserving souls while it might on the undeserving ones. For, Brahman is not capricious or whimsical, but is the embodiment of justice and compassion. He certainly comes

to those who seek him, and the descent of His grace synchronizes with the highest culmination of devotion on the part of the individual.

Sri Narahari Tirtha, the direct disciple of Sri Madhva, was the immediate successor to the Mutt after Sri Madhva. Because of his great vairagya, he was respected by all; he was highly critical of hypocrisy and pretension and pleaded for whole-hearted devotion to God. His composition in Kannada was the first in the Dasakuta tradition, and hence he is regarded as the forerunner of the Dasakuta movement.

After Sri Narahari Tirtha, Sri Jaya Tirtha wrote various notes (*tika*) on the commentaries of Sri Madhva, and thereby rendered great service to the cause of promulgating the philosophy of Sri Madhva. Because of his various works, he came to be known as Tikacarya, and was held in high esteem by the subsequent Vaishnava saints.



CHAPTER III

The Teaching of The Haridasas.

The system of Vedanta taught by Sri Madhva formed the philosophical basis of the two traditions of Vaishnava saints who succeeded him. These two traditions are familiarly known as Vyasakuta and Dasakuta. The saints of Vyasakuta wrote commentaries in Sanskrit and stressed the need for scriptural knowledge and devotion to the Divine; they were great scholars in scriptures, sought to solve the philosophical riddles and defend the truths of Sri Madhva's philosophy against the criticisms of the other schools of thought. The saints of Dasakuta, on the other hand, preached the same truths to the masses through the medium of Kannada and emphasised among them the need for worship and cultivation of devotion to the Divine. But it will be incorrect to over-emphasise the distinction of these two traditions, since apart from the difference in the medium of composition, the spirit of their teaching was the same; both emphasised devotion to God and there was no philosophical or doctrinal difference between them. Moreover, many saints composed both in Sanskrit and Kannada, and thus expressed the ideas of Vaishnava

philosophy in both these languages. However, Sri Sripadaraya, Sri Vyasaraja, Sri Vadiraja and Sri Raghavendra may be said to belong primarily to Vyasakuta, while Sri Purandara, Sri Vijayadasa, Sri Gopaladasa and Sri Jagannathadasa may be said to belong to Dasakuta.

The Vaishnava saints who preached the cult of Vishnubhakti in Kannada having as their basis the philosophy of Sri Madhva were known as the Haridasas, and the Haridasa movement may be said to extend roughly from the 15th Century to the 19th Century A. D. Their teaching may briefly be explained here.

1. Sri Sripadaraja

Sripadaraja was a Haridasa of the 15th Century. He belonged to Mulabagal in Kolar District and composed several poems in dedication to Lord Rangavittala. He was thus responsible for the spread of Vaishnavism in Karnatak in the 15th Century.

Sri Sripadaraja has summed up the postulates of the Vaishnava philosophy of Sri Madhva in a sloka in Sanskrit as follows:

> " Sri Hari is Supreme; the world is real; the five-fold differences are real; the individual souls are dependent on Sri Hari as His servants or followers (anucaras); they are of different gradations; liberation consists in the realization of the natural bliss of the soul; Bhakti is the means for it; Perception, Inference and Verbal

Testimony are the means of knowledge; Sri Hari can be known only through Verbal Testimony ...[1] .... "

Sri Sripadaraja has based his religious teaching on the Vaishnava philosophy of Sri Madhva and it may be stated here briefly.

Moksha is the ultimate value of human existence and it consists in the realization of the true nature of the soul in its relation of complete dependence on God. This will be possible only through the cultivation of devotion to God, non-attachment to the wordly objects and unfailing performance of the religious rites and duties as ordained by the scriptures. But the man who is subject to the temptations of the worldly objects finds it too difficult to cultivate devotion to God, in spite of his good company (*satsangha*) and learning under a guru. Hence Sri Sripadaraja beseeches the Lord Himself to take mercy on man and grant him the feeling of being a servant of God (*dasyabhava*). In fact, the saint prays God to grant him at least the privilege of being a servant of the last in the series of servants of God.[2]

Once devotion to God takes its roots in man's consciousness, he will naturally cultivate a sense of dependence on Him; he will control the sensory operations and direct them towards the Divine Being. Even this, the devotee

1. R. S. Panchamukhi, **op. cit.**, p. 98.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 113.

feels, is the result not of his self-effort but of the grace of God.

One can see in the songs of Sri Sripadaraja, the feeling of anguish which the saint suffers because of his estrangement from the Lord and involvement in the world. In one of his songs the saint says that thirty-six years of his life have been a waste for not being able to ' see ' the Lord, and in another song he even envisages the possibility of committing suicide,[3] if the Lord does not protect him. The songs of Sri Sripadaraja thus imply the saint's thirst for the Divine and his devaluation of earthly existence in preference to the Divine grace.

Sri Sripadaraja insists on the supremacy of the Divine Being and this truth is to be realized through right knowledge, devotion to God, and non-attachment to the worldly objects. Absolute subordination to the Supreme will of the Divine is characteristic of the devotee's life and being satisfied with his lot, he asks his Lord for neither more nor less.

2. Sri Vyasatirtha.

Sri Vyasatirtha of Hampi in Karnatak was a saint of the 16th Century who composed poems in devotion to Lord Krishna. He studied Dvaita Vedanta under Sri Sripadaraja

3. **Ibid.**, p. 114.

for whom he had great reverence, and preached Vishnu-bhakti throughout Karnatak. He was highly learned among the Vyasakuta saints and composed songs profusely in Kannada also; he was thereby regarded as a very great saint both in the Vyasakuta and Dasakuta traditions.

A brief summary of Sri Vyasatirtha's teaching may be given here:

Due to wrong knowledge (*mithyajnana*) the individual cultivates a sense of independence, ignores the supremacy of the Divine, and performs a series of bad deeds. Sri Vyasatirtha has described this basic idea quite graphically in some of his compositions.[4] He compares the role of the individual's ignorance or delusion (*maya*) to that of a ruler (*raya*) in him, and his false sense of independence born out of it to that of the minister (*mantri*); the five senses are like the soldiers (*parivara*) and under the influence of the basic delusion [*maya*] and the false sense of independence [*svatantra- bhrama*], they go after the worldly objects in search of happiness [*visaya-sukha*]. But the result is frustration, and frustration leads to the six passions such as *kama* [desire], *krodha* [anger], *lobha* [greed or miserlyness], *moha* [bewilderment], *mada* [pride] and *matsara* [envy]. These passions are the " enemies " of man since they lead to his spiritual degradation. Thus the individual comes to be surrendered into the " enemy's " camp as a result

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4. **Haridasara pada, suladigalu**, published by Hanumantha Rao Gorabal, Lingasagur, Adhyatma Suladi 12, 6. p. 37.

of the operation of the senses under the influence of delusion and false sense of independence.

Sri Vyasatirtha compares the individual who is subject to the temptations of the world to a fly caught in honey, and a fish caught because of the bait. It is necessary for the individual to save himself from this sway of passions. For this, he must restrain the operations of the senses towards the worldly objects and direct them towards the Divine; but the senses can be controlled only when the mind is controlled and made the abode of the Divine. This, however, is extremely difficult to achieve. For, the human mind is most unsteady and susceptible to the delusion of independence; even while performing good deeds externally, the mind might entertain bad thoughts internally. In all humility, the saint speaks of this as referring to his own mind; this, however, need not be taken to mean that he really had these weaknesses; for, he is only envisaging the possibility of such weaknesses of the human mind in general. Accordingly, if the individual should control the mind, he should first become aware of its weaknesses – possible and actual – and caution it against them. This is a process of painful introspection and self-criticism which invariably leads to the humility of the mind.

But the control of the mind being most difficult, Sri Vyasathirtha emphasises that it cannot take place without the grace of the Divine. Hence in utter devotion he prays the Lord to save him from the passions and the temptations of the world. The grace of the Divine comes, however, only to those who seek it with devotion. Hence

devotion to the Lord is the indispensable condition of liberation. But devotion to the Divine Being is not posssible without right knowledge of the supremacy of the Brahman and one's own dependence on Him. Hence devotion must be coupled with right knowledge [*Jnana*] and non-attachment to the worldly objects [*virakti*].

Living in company with the devoted souls (*satsanga*) is also necessary for the cultivation of devotion to God. Devotion or bhakti can be best sustained through the hearing of the greatness of the Lord (*sravana*), singing His praise (*kirtana*) and constantly remembering His supremacy (*smarana*). If the mind is to be sustained in this process of devotion, the grace of the Lord is absolutely necessary and it will surely come to one even if a humble beginning is made in that direction. For, as Sri Vyasathirtha says, the Lord is most merciful and is immensely pleased even by the smallest offerings we make to Him. To illustrate this point, the saint takes the examples of Kuchela and Vidura. He says that in perfect devotion the devotee experiences a sense of wholly belonging to the Lord as His servant. His devotion to God becomes a whole-time concern and he constantly remembe s God in whatever he does or thinks. He would conceive of his own body as the temple of God, his own heart as the seat of God, his two eyes as the two lights (deepa) burning before Him and his two hands as the fans [*chamara*] for God; his words would be such as could be regarded as flowers of worship, and his movements would be such as could be regarded the various dances (natya) performed for the pleasure fo the Lord. This

indeed is the nature of a God-intoxicated individual who lives in perfect attunement with the Divine.

Sri Vyasathirtha lays special stress on the compassion of the Lord (*dayasindhu*) and goes to the extent of saying that even if we utter His name either symbolically or in jest or in imitation, he will grant us liberation (*Mukti*).[5] He compares the Lord to a mother who does not forsake the child because of his mistakes, and says that he who has firm faith in God need fear neither death nor the results of one's past misdeeds.[6]

3. Sri Purandaradasa

Sri Purandaradasa, a disciple of Sri Vyasathirtha, was another saint of the 16th Century. He was born in Purandara-Gadh and stayed with Sri Vyasathirtha in Anegondi near Hampi and later preached his faith in the several places of Karnatak. It is said that Sri Purandara was a miser in the beginning of his life, but due to a miraculous event which was displayed to him by God who appeared as a Brahmin, he changed the course of his life, gave away all his belongings in charity to the poor and became a saint singing the praise of God and preaching His glory to the masses through his songs. It is said that

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5. **Ibid., Vairagya Suladi** 11, 5, p. 35.
6. **Ibid., Suladi** 10., 1. p. 32 and 11, 2. p. 34.

Sri Purandaradasa composed about four lakh and seventy five thousand songs (4,75 000) and these songs had undoubtedly a lasting popular appeal inasmuch as they are sung and enjoyed even today. The songs of Sri Purandaradasa are known for their simplicity of style, homely similes, the frankness with which he lays bare the evils of actual life and the vividness with which he has presented the philosophical truths in the context of the actual life of ordinary people; his songs are accordingly most popular among all classes of people in Karnatak, and even those who perhaps know little or nothing about the other saints know a good deal about the songs of Sri Purandaradasa. The songs of Sri Purandaradasa contain a rich philosophical import, in recognition of which Sri Vyasathirtha has characterised them as 'Purandaropanishad'.

Sri Purandaradasa's teaching is very comprehensive and includes the various truths of actual life, religious faith and philosophical thinking. The householder's life is not necessarily an impediment in the seeking of God, for what matters is the spirit with which it is lived. He should not flee from the family but stay in it and face the battle of life. He should love his family not for the sake of the family but for the sake of God who is present in all beings; he should perform the virtuous acts with the awareness of his own dependence on God and resigning the fruits of action to Him.This kind of disinterested participation in life will not tarnish his soul or bind him to the world, but will qualify him for Mukti.

Sri Purandaradasa draws our attention repeatedly to the transitoriness and the consequent worthlessness of all empirical objects. Sexual happiness (*Hennu*), wealth (*Honnu*) and landed property (*Mannu*) are all no doubt enticing to man, but they are all transitory and lead man into delusion and misery. As Sri Purandaradasa says, "Useless is the desire for sexual happiness, wealth and landed property, for certain is the journey to hell after death." The human body through which the worldly objects are sought perishes at death and hence it is not worthwhile pampering it. All our empirical associations with mother, father, brothers and other relations are transitory since no one will accompany us after death. Death is thus the end of man's present life on earth and man feels 'alone' at death; death 'disrelates' him to the rest of the world[7] and all his worldly possessions and relations become devalued from the standpoint of his inevitable death. This life of worldly pursuits is hence to be transcended and this transcendence takes place only through the cultivation of devotion to Purandara Vittalah (God) who alone can free the soul from its empirical involvements and grant it bliss.

Sri Purandaradasa stresses the point that the individual who has not oriented his existence towards the Divine through devotion undergoes worry and suffering throughout his empirical existence and it makes no difference whether or not he is in possession of something in the

7. **Sri Karnataka Haridasa Kirtana Tarangini**, Vol. II, p. 19.

world: having a wife causes as much worry as not having one or having an idiotic one; having children causes as much worry as not having them; thus things both present and absent equally cause worry and the redemption of it can be found only in the cultivation of constant devotion to the Lord.

Awareness of the misery surrounding empirical existence makes a man disinterested (virakta) in it and with this virakti develops bhakti in the Divine Being. But it is not easy to cultivate virakti. For, however much we try, the mind and the senses seem to go after the worldly objects of pleasure. In fact, it is much more difficult to control the mind than the senses since the former is unsteady and feels most attached to the body. But it is of no use controlling the senses without controlling the mind. In this connection Sri Purandardasa is highly critical of all those who make much of external practices without internal control of the mind and devotion to the Lord.[8] What is the use of bathing in holy waters, fasting and silence, if one has no internal non-attachment to the worldly objects and devotion to God? For, neither the sins are washed off by washing the skin, nor does the virtue accumulate by the other external practices in the absence of inner purity. Hence true virakti consists not so much of external practices but of internal detachment to the worldly objects and devotion to the Lord, and the people who follow the former without the latter are the

8. Ibid., pp. 65, 71.

hypocrites and pretenders. Sri Purandaradasa says that their 'seeming' detachment has only the practical motive of winning the bread (*udara vairagya*), and they are the 'cunning' people at whom the saint cannot help laughing. Sri Purandaradasa thus exposes the futility of external pretentious behaviour in many of his songs and pleads for the cultivation of self-control, practice of virtue and devotion to God. The essence of true religion consists not in the external modes of behaviour, but in the internal purity and dedication to God. The external practices without the internal spirit of devotion would be like an empty shell without kernel and worth nothing.

Since the control of mind is most difficult, the devotee should pray God to help him control it so as to concentrate on Him. Thus devotion to God itself is the result of the grace of God and the saint prays God not for riches and worldly happiness but to grant him devotion and treat him as the servant of His servants. The devotee who prays God with such fervent devotion can be sure of being saved by Him.

Sri Purandaradasa lays great stress on remembering and uttering the name of God as an effective means of sustaining devotion (Bhakti); this 'smarana' is however subsequent to sravana or hearing about the greatness of the Lord from a Guru (Guropadesa). Smarana is not only of the nature of manana or understanding the Divine truth (*Khanda Smarana*) but also of the nature of Dhyana or meditation (*Akhanda Smarana*). Cultivation of the

company of devotees (*Satsangha*) and constant participation in devotional performances such as the singing about the supremacy of Lord (*Harinama Kirthana*) and His worship (*Haripuja*) are also the best means of sustaining devotion towards God.

The true devotee who cherishes such intense bhakti will not be affected by the envious people, for he is like fire and ants do not go near fire; he is not affected by the results of his own actions, since he performs them in a spirit of dedication to God; by thus remaining in the world like the lotus in water he will be able to cross the ocean of Samsara.

4. Sri Vadirajathirtha.

Sri Vadirajathirtha, a disciple of Sri Vyasathirtha, was another Vaishnava saint of the 16th Century and he belonged to Udipi. He wrote both in Sanskrit and Kannada and was known for his scholarship and detachment both among the Vyasakuta and Dasakuta saints. A vehement defence of the Dvaita philosophy can be found in his works and like other saints, he also stressed the need for cultivation of Bhakti.

Sri Vadiraja says that the worldly objects seem to be pleasant in the beginning but lead us to misery ultimately. Human birth is attained only after the soul passes through several other inferior births, and moreover, human life is most transitory and a short one. Much time is lost in

childish ignorance, sport, sleep, hunger, back-biting and idle talk; one should regret such life and pray God for redemption before the whole life is wasted away. The body is transitory and is sure to perish any time like a light burning in the wind *(galidipa)*; hence the devotee should appeal to God to free him from his attachment to the world.

Sravana (hearing the Divine truths), manana (understanding them through reflexion), nidhidhyasana (meditation on the Divine truths) and the Divine grace (*prasada*) constitute the ladder to liberation (*Mukti*) and one should follow this path with great austerity and tenacity of purpose. Sri Vadiraja has, in fact, prescribed a strict code of conduct[9] (*vratas* and *niyamas*) for the devotee and has emphasised the need for daily worship (*Sandhyavandana*, *puja*, *naivedya* etc.) and the performance of all such activities (atithisatkara, satsangha, harikatha-sravana and upavasa) as would be conducive to develop devotion to God.

5. Sri Kanakadasa.

Another saint of the 16th Century was Sri Kanakadasa of Bada in Bankapur Taluk. He dedicated his compositions to the Adikesava of Kaginele in Hirekerur Taluk. He belonged to a shepherd's community (Kuruba) by birth, but stayed in the Math of Sri Vyasathirtha and lived a

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9. **Haridasara pada suladigalu, Suladi** 5, 4. p. 51.

saintly life. He was known for his true understanding of the nature of God and his intense devotion to Him. This endeared him to Sri Vyasathirtha as narrated in the various episodes of his life and earned him an important place among the Vaishnava saints. Sri Kanakadasa composed many devotional songs and was also the author of many books in Kannada like 'Haribhaktisara', 'Ramadhyana charitre', 'Nalacharitre' and 'Mohana Tarangini'. His songs are known for their simplicity of style and deep religious import.

Ordinarily, man does not know the 'where-forth' and 'where-from' of his existence;[10] nor does he care to understand the transitoriness of his present relations to the world; fancying them to be eternal, he goes after worldly happiness with the feeling that he can achieve it by his own self-effort and involves himself into misery. This is due to his false sense of independence born out of his ignorance of the supremacy of God and the dependence of all that is on Him.

Man has attained this human birth only after passing through several other inferior births and this is given to him only for realizing the supremacy of God. His life is most transitory like that of the light in the wind; death is certain, and sooner or later, people who hold him dear

10. **Sri Karnataka Haridasa Kirtana Tarangini**, Vol. III, p. 57.

now will forsake him. He should hence learn to distinguish between the eternal and the non-eternal and try to concentrate on the eternal without being deluded by the non-eternal objects and the relations of the world. This will be possible only when his participation in worldly life is backed by a spirit of detachment (*Virakti*) and devotion (*Bhakti*) to God. He should intensely pray God to relieve him of his suffering in the world and grant him freedom. . God's grace (*prasada*) will come to a man in this respect, only if his devotion is filled with sincere and intense feeling as otherwise his devotion would turn out to be mere pretension (*yukti*).[11] Like Purandaradasa, Sri Kanakadasa is also most critical of pretentious devotion and emphasises its futility.

Sri Kanakadasa lays special stress on the idea that apart from the individual's own past karma and his fitness for worldly experience, the deluding power (*Bandhaka Sakti*) of the Lord is also greatly responsible for the bondage of the individual soul. Hence man's liberation would result only when the Lord, out of His grace for him, would lift His deluding power and forward instead his liberating power. To earn the grace of God, man should overcome his false sense of independence[12] and surrender himself completely to Him. Indeed, the man who has surrendered himself to God feels that his own body and mind belong to the Divine and hence even his own errors (if any) belong

11. **Ibid**, p. 23
12. **Ibid.**, p. 24

to Him alone, since without His motivating power *(prerana)* he can do nothing. The individual should thus realize his complete dependence on the Divine and this earns for him the Divine grace and leads him to liberation.

6. Sri Raghavendrathirtha.

After the fall of the Vijayanagar kingdom in about 1565 A. D., Vaishnavism which was highly popularized by the efforts of Sri Vyasathirtha and the other saints in Hampi and the surrounding regions suffered a lull in its development. But its influence was soon revived by the efforts of Sri Raghavendra who settled in Mantralaya in Raichur Taluk and preached the cult of Vishnu-bhakti in Karnatak. He was an erudite Sanskrit scholar and commented on the Vedas, Upanishadas, Jaimini Sutras and the works of Sri Madhvacharya. He belonged to the Vyasakuta tradition of saints. But he also composed in Kannada in dedication to Dhiravenugopala and thus equally belonged to the Dasakuta tradition. Sri Raghavendra was greatly responsible for the enrichment of both the traditions and it is believed that even after his departure from the material body he still continues to be 'present' in the Brindavan at Mantralaya. Mantralaya is hence regarded as an important holy place by all the Vaishnavites in Karnatak.

Sri Raghavendra draws our attention to the pervasive misery in life and stresses the need for the pursuit of

liberation. Awareness of misery engenders detachment from the worldly objects and from detachment is born devotion to God. The devoted individual would be aware of all his defects and feels that he is a child of God; he prays God to forgive him for all his faults and lead out of suffering. He approaches God in a spirit of utter humility and prays God in despair to save him; he has firm faith that God alone is the ultimate refuge and there is no other saviour for him except God. There is thus a bond of union between the devotee and the Lord, and it is devotion (Bhakti) which binds the devotee to the Lord and liberates him from his bondage to the world.

7. Sri Vijayadasa.

Sri Vijayadasa was a Vaishnava saint of repute in about the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th Century. He belonged to a place called Chikalaparavi and is said to have composed about 25,000 poems in dedication to Vijayavittala.

The relation between Sri Hari (God) and the individual Jiva is one of bimba and pratibimba or the original and its image. In the case of the reflection of ordinary objects, one might say that the original would be present even before its reflection takes place; but in the case of God's reflection in the individual soul, the relation between them is eternal and non-temporal. God is not temporally prior to the individual soul since both are eternal, and the relation of the individual soul to God is one of logical dependence.

Sri Hari alone is independent and just as an image depends on the original for its existence, so does the individual soul on Sri Hari for its existence,activity and experience. While Sri Hari is independent (*Svatantra),* full of auspicious qualities (*Sarvagunaparipurna*), universal *(Vyapta)* and omnipresent (*Sarvantaryami*), the individual soul is dependent and is of limited knowledge, existence and capacity. In fact, whatever knowledge, existence and activity it has would come to it only from God on whom it depends. But this is a basic truth which the individual jiva often ignores, and in ignorance the individual soul thinks of itself as independendent and begins to act as if it can acquire happiness by its own self-effort. This state of bondage is due to the soul's beginningless karma. But karma by itself being jada or non-intelligent, cannot bring about the soul's bondage and hence it is only the Supreme Intelligent Being or God who, by exercising His binding power (*bandhaka sakti)* over the soul binds it to prakriti in accordance with the karma of the soul. As a result, the individual develops an extravertive consciousness and becomes more and more involved in bondage under the false sense of independence from the Lord. He goes after in endless search of worldly happiness and seeks to satisfy his desires thereby. But to hope that one can satisfy one's desires by seeking worldly happiness is as futile as to hope that one can fill up the sea by the sands of the seven islands. He tries to amass wealth by begging and serving others; no doubt, his own relations praise him as long as he has wealth, but once he loses wealth, they forsake him and laugh at him.

The right course of life would be to become aware of the fact that life contains only a drop (bindu) of pleasure as against a mountain of misery, develop detachment to the worldly objects and concentrate with devotion on the Lord. But the mind itself is very weak and changing, and hence man should pray God to grant him devotion (*Bhakti*). Devotion should, however, be coupled with right knowledge about Brahman and detachment to the worldly objects, if the individual should be granted liberation by the Lord. Mere external practices would be of no avail in this regard since by themselves they do not cleanse the mind and make it fit for liberation. This, however, does not mean that all external activities are to be discarded, for virtuous actions performed in a spirit of dedication to God can be a means of winning His grace, inasmuch as they include detachment (*Virakti*) and devotion (*Bhakti.*)

While emphasising the need for right knowledge, Sri Vijayadasa says that right knowledge does not consist of mere scriptural scholarship, but actual realization of the supremacy of Brahman and the dependence of all that is on Him. This is intuitive knowledge (*Aparoksha jnana*) which God grants to the individual out of mercy on him as a result of the individual's virakti and bhakti.

The man who has thus earned for himself the Divine grace need not fear anything and as a father does to his son, God feeds the devotee every day and does not allow him to starve or be harmed by others. This becomes the firm faith of the devotee since he has surrendered his body

and mind, and all his activities to the Divine with a sense of complete dependence on Him. The protection (*Yoga-kshema*) of the devotee is thus the responsibility of the Lord who never forsakes those who surrender themselves to Him.

8. Sri Prasanna Venkatadasa.

Sri Prasannavenkatadasa was a contemporary of Sri Vijayadasa and belonged to Kakhandiki in Bijapur district. Like the other Haridasas, he has also stressed the need for virakti and bhakti in his songs which are dedicated to Sri Prasannavenkata. He insists that human life would be a waste without devotion to Lord Srinivasa. To seek refuge under other men is useless and sheer waste of time; the best course would be to seek shelter under the Graceful God. Verily, God does not forsake those who seek His grace, for He is most compassionate; and the devotee will always be free from poverty and fear of all sorts. But he should pray God for nothing except mercy, for, with His mercy comes everything else.

Sri Prasannavenkatadasa compares the human desires and passions to enemies and calls upon the devotee to fight them out like a soldier in the battlefield. The devotee should join the army of the Lord (*Harisena*) as against the army of the wicked (*Duritasena*) and should try to preserve and pursue the path of devotion.

The saint prays Lord Srinivasa in fervent devotion to

make him His servant (*Bhanta*), beat him if he goes wrong and yet protect him and guide him out of the ocean of samsara. The saint thus enters into an intimate personal relation with the Divine and proclaims that the Lord is his father, mother, son and relation, and that He alone can save him and grant him liberation. In all humility, the saint even says that there is no iota of devotion in him, that he is not learned and yet God should save him in His infinite mercy. Like the songs of Sri Purandaradasa, the songs of Sri Prasannavenkatadasa would have a direct appeal to the listener's mind and a lasting influence over it.

9. Sri Gopaladasa

Sri Gopaladasa was a disciple of Sri Vijayadasa and belonged to Venisomapura in Bijapur District. He composed several poems in dedication to Lord Gopala Vittala.

Sri Gopaladasa has emphasised that it is highly difficult to cultivate detachment and he says this difficulty is indeed due to the binding power of the Lord Himself.[13] However, since bondage of the soul is due to the binding power of the Lord, its liberation can only be due to His liberating power. In response to man's devotion, God loosens His binding power and with the result, detachment from the

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13. **Sri Karnataka Haridasa Kirtana Tarangini,** Vol. VII, p. 3.

worldly objects develops in man. But a man's devotion to God should be sincere and intense, if God should take mercy on him. In devotion he should be aware of the supremacy of the Lord, his own complete dependence on Him and surrender himself completely to Him without seeking refuge under the finite mortals who come to him when he is prosperous and helpful to them, but forsake him otherwise. The devotee should pray God to free him from his false sense of independence and enable him to concentrate on the Divine supremacy.

Sri Gopaladasa compares the individual soul in its relation to the worldly passions to a rat taking shelter under the hood of a cobra,[14] and any time it is sure to be 'swallowed' by the passions. It is hence foolish to rest satisfied with this state of being. The saint compares the human body to a fort (*Durga*) and says that the individual soul stays in it as ordained by God; but the soul of the devotee hardly finds any pleasure in this state of being, and moreover, as time passes, the body becomes worn out and perishes.[15] Hence, without developing attachment to the transient body, the devotee should seek the grace of God for realizing eternal bliss.

Sri Gopaladasa says that man ordinarily functions under a false sense of independence during his waking

14. **Ibid.**, p. 37.
15. **Ibid.**, p. 26.

(*jagrata*) and dreaming (*svapna*) states; but during the state of dreamless sleep (*sushupti*) the dependence of the individual soul on God becomes manifest; from this, the same will have to be inferred as being the basic truth of also the states of waking and dreaming.[16] But this truth comes to be fully realized by man only through devotion and the grace of God.

Commenting on the t ue detachment (*vairagya*) the saint says that it does not consist merely in giving up wealth or living in seclusion away from family and society; true vairagya consists in the constant contemplation of the supremacy of God with wholesome devotion and accepting that whatever happens would be in accordance with the Divine will and hence for the good of oneself. The man who lives his life with this kind of devotion and satisfaction is a "Muktiyogya" who is fit for liberation.

10. Sri Jagannathadasa.

Sri Jagannathadasa who was a disciple of Sri Gopaladasa was a Haridasa of the 18th Century. He was highly learned in the scriptures. Among his Kannada works, 'Sri Harikathamritasara' is well known.

Like the other Haridasas, Sri Jagannathadasa has also emphasised the need for right knowledge, detachment and devotion as the means for liberation through the Divine grace. One should realize that life is transitory and develop devotion to God and detachment from the worldly objects.

16. R. S. Panchamukhi, **op. cit.**, p. 200

Devotion should, however, be sincere and not a feigned one, if God should be pleased.

Sri Jagannathadasa has specially emphasised the dependence of the individual soul on God for its knowledge, volition and activity. God establishes the relation between the knower and the known so as to give rise to knowledge and in this sense the individual soul depends on God for its knowledge. Its volition and activity are also dependent on God, since they depend on His will for their fulfilment.

God is functionally present in all that is and is responsible for all that happens in the world, though He remains unaffected by them. The experiences of the individual jiva, no doubt, take place in time due to its own previous activities or karma, but karma being non-intelligent, it is only God, the Supreme Intelligent Being, who brings about those experiences in accordance with the karma of individual soul. Referring to the omnipresence of the Lord, the saint says that He is the truth 'known' by the study of the scriptures as being present in them; He is the person who makes the scriptural truths 'known' as being present in the instructor or Guru; He is also the 'knower' of the truth as being present in the hearer's organs of knowledge.[17] God is most compassionate to those who are devoted to Him, saves them from all obstacles and difficulties and grants them liberation.



17. **Sri Karnaraka Haridasa Kirtana Tarangini,** Vol. III, p. 219.

CHAPTER IV

Some Observations In Retrospect

The brief narration of the teaching of the several Haridasas in the previous chapter would enable us to describe briefly the common salient features of their teaching in general. For a proper assessment of their teaching, it would be necessary to take into consideration the general import of their teaching without attaching undue importance to some of the apparent sectarian implications which might sometimes be associated with it. Concentrating on the general import of their teaching, it can be rightly said that their teaching undoubtedly has a meaning and message for the whole of humanity irrespective of caste or creed.

Taking the word 'philosophical' in a broad sense, it can be said that these saints have emphasised the need for cultivating a philosophical attitude to life. Their attitude, however, is not merely logical or intellectual, but is charged with emotion. But what is emotive need not necessarily be

less philosophical. For, many a basic truth of existence comes to be disclosed to us emotively or moodwise, and not through intellectual analysis. The Haridasas have expressed their reaction to worldly experience, and since experiences are 'felt', their reaction to those experiences cannot be but emotive. Accordingly, the teaching of the Haridasas is full of concepts which are emotive and philosophical but not logical or intellectual.

The philosophy of the Haridasas has a psychological origin inasmuch as it springs from a felt dissatisfaction at the pleasures of the world. This dissatisfaction is not, however, merely due to the fact that there is more pain than pleasure in the world, but due to the awareness of the transitoriness and the 'vacuity' of worldly pleasures. Accordingly, worldly pleasures fail to 'satisfy' even while they last and can hardly be distinguished from pain inasmach as they are sure to bring pain in consequence. The worldly life of pleasure and pain is hence said to be uninteresting *(nissara)* and is characterised as one of misery *(duhkha)*.

The teaching of the Haridasas is characterised by the devaluation of all the worldly possessions from the stand-point of death. Death is inevitable and imminent; it 'disrelates' the individual from all his worldly possessions and thereby reduces them to 'nothing'; the worldly possessions are thus ultimately worthless and are not worth pursuing.

Out of this awareness of the transitoriness, inner

'vacuity' and ultimate worthlessness of all worldly possessions and pleasures, the individual develops the sense of surrounding misery about the whole life. Misery or *duhkha* does not arise out of this or that object in the external world, but is a basic feeling which expresses the individual's reactions to life as a whole. It is not a fleeting feeling of the individual, but an abiding one; but he often seeks to escape from it by involving himself in sensuous activities through his extravertive consciousness. However, duhkha announces itself as that from which he is trying to escape and thus reminds him of itself throughout his worldly life. When this feeling of misery *(duhkha)* comes to be faced and accepted by the individual, the feeling of detachment from the worldly objects will become manifest in him.

Almost every saint has distinguished between the false and the true detachment (*vairagya*). The false detachment is purely external and a feigned one; it is only the device of the cunning people to earn their livelihood. True detachment, on the other hand, is interior and is born of genuine loss of interest or desire towards the worldly possessions. Moreover, true detachment is not a passing feeling but a deep and enduring one which becomes the precondition of one's devotion to God.

All the Haridasas have, however, pointed out that true detachment is most difficult to cultivate since man is liable to worldly temptations in spite of his awareness of the consequent misery. Hence in order to develop and sustain detachment from the worldly objects, man should pray God

to help him do it. Detachment is thus the result of the grace of God and praying for detachment is true devotion to Him. In true devotion, man does not ask God to give him worldly prosperity but to detach him from it so as to make him fully aware of his own 'true' being or nature.

This brings us to a distinction of the two levels of human existence — the authentic and the inauthentic — which is present all through the teaching of the Haridasas. The authentic existence consists in the realization of God's independence and supremacy and the dependence of all existents including oneself on Him for existence, knowledge and activity, whereas the inauthentic existence consists in man's ignorance of God's supremacy and acting under a false sense of one's own independence with the view of procuring worldly happiness. The Haridasa movement in a nutshell is a call addresed to each man to awaken himself from his inauthentic existence and to tread the path of authentic existence.

The implications of authentic existence preached by the Haridasas should however be carefully noted. Firstly, it is obvious that it does not mean in their Vaishnava philosophy what it means in the Atheistic Existentialism of Sartre.[1] That is to say, it does not mean

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1. For a critical exposition of Sartre's Existentialism, please see my book, – **The Existentialist Concepts and the Hindu Philosophical Systems,** Udayana Publications, Allahabad, 1967.

living the life of ethical freedom with a sense of 'forlornness', but living a virtuous life with a sense of complete dependence on God. Secondly, the authentic existence emphasised by the Haridasas does not necessarily imply the forsaking of the family or society, but participation in social life in a virtuous manner resigning the fruits of action to God, and with a sense of dependence on Him. Authentic existence is thus a life of commitment to God through sincere devotion. Thirdly, neither mere textual scholarship nor mere ethical life would by itself be regarded as authentic existence, since neither by itself would be able to lead a man towards the final fulfilment of his being conceived as liberation from worldly misery and realization of eternal bliss in proximity to God; it is only when they are coupled with devotion to God they become effective means of authentic existence. Devotion to God is thus the ruling principle of authentic life, and life lived in accordance with it will earn His grace and lead man towards the fulfilment of his being or mukti.

This path of devotion is prescribed by the Haridasas, not as one of the alternative paths to God-realization, but as the only path. The reality of God can be grasped only through experiencing it and devotion is the only means of experiencing it. Moreover right knowledge and virtuous life which are emphasised by the Haridasas are the preliminary and inseparable conditions of devotion and hence can not be regarded as independent paths.

Nor would it be correct to say that the path of devotion

is an easy one and that the Haridasas taught it in preference to the other paths considered to be more difficult. For, true devotion is said to be the result of one's inner trans-cendence of all selfish attachments, and the difficulty of cultivating true devotion has been equally emphasised by all the Haridasas.

The Haridasas were not mere social reformers in the strict sense of the term. Nevertheless they were intensely aware of all social evils and sought to remedy them by their teaching. The spirit of their teaching was that all social evils would spring from man's selfishness, and hence if selfishness could be overcome through the cultivation of devotion to God and disinterestedness (virakti) in worldly pleasures, all forms of human wickedness would disappear. In fact, the teaching of the Haridasas was characterised by the great stress they laid on the importance of virtuous life. They insisted that man would become great or small not by virtue of his birth in a caste but by virtue of the kind of life he lived. Accordingly any one could be regarded as of low caste (holeya) depending on his immoral behaviour. In a well known song, Sri Purandaradasa has said :

> There is no *holeya* or *holati* in the *Holageri*. He is a *holeya* who is harsh to his father and mother and in his infatuation to his wife. She is a *holati* who hates husband and conspires with her sons against him; he is a *holeya* who having acquired learning and happiness learns to scorn the aged; she is a *holati* who panders to other men and is constantly irritating and cantankerous to her husband; he is a *holeya* who remains unaffected by tenderness at the sight of those who are feeble and wretched; she is a *holati* who is always quarrelsome, jealous and lustful; he is a *holeya* who does not love or worship God; she is a *holati* who seeks to live oblivious of God."[2]

The Haridasas are to be regarded as mystics, and for them God is not a logical concept or an ethical idea but a 'living' personality. The concept of personality has a much richer connotation than the concept of man, and God conceived as the supreme personality is not only free from all the egoistic limitations of man, but possesses all the auspicious attributes in limitless abundance. Moreover, the conception of God as the supreme personality makes 'meaningful communication' possible between Him and the devotee. In this personal relation, the devotee addresses God in the second person as 'Thou' and regards Him as his Father, Mother, Son and Relation; while all his relationships with the world seem to be transitory and deceptive, he realizes the truth that God alone is his unfailing Saviour and guide. There is a special emphasis placed on the compassion of God by the Haridasas; the individual's devotion to God and God's compassion for the yearning individual are indeed integral to each other in a mystic's personal relationship with God.

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2. Translated and quoted in Dr. M. V. Krishna Rao, **Purandara and the Haridasa Movement,** Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1966. p p. 142-143.